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ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

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DRAFTED BY: S/S:JPMOFFAT:HE

APPROVED BY: S/S:JPMOFFAT

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DACCA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 265530

NODIS

FOL REPEAT OF NEW DELHI 14847 TO SECSTATE NOV 08

QTE:

S E C R E T NEW DELHI 14847

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, IN, BD

SUBJECT: MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY ON BANGLADESH

SUMMARY: FOREIGN SECRETARY KEWAL SINGH DEEPLY APPRECIATED THE SECRETARY'S LETTER, SAYING THAT OUR SPEAKING TO THE NEW BANGLADESH LEADERS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH INDIA AND COMMUNAL HARMONY SHOULD BE MOST HELPFUL. HE TOOK NOTE OF THE SECRETARY'S VIEW ABOUT EXTERNAL INVOLVEMENT IN BANGLADESH AND AGREED THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE ABLE TO TEND TO ITS INTERNAL PROBLEMS WITHOUT EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE. THE INDIAN VIEW IS THAT THINGS ARE SETTLING DOWN IN BANGLADESH AND THAT GENERAL ZIA IS A PRACTICAL MAN OF NO PARTICULARLY STRONG IDEOLOGY. THE GOI REMAINS GREATLY CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE COMMUNAL RIOTING IN BANGLADESH WHICH COULD CAUSE SERIOUS HINDU-MUSLIM DISCORD IN

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INDIA. THERE HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN NO MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES SO FAR.

KEWAL SINGH'S, VIEW IS THAT IF EVENTS IN BANGLADESH CONTINUE MOVING IN THE CONSTRUCTIVE WAY THEY HAVE FOR THE PAST DAY, THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE A PROBLEM AFFECTING INDIA'S INTERESTS. BUT IF THE NEW BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT TURNS SHARPLY COMMUNAL OR VERY HOSTILE TO INDIA, THE GOI MIGHT HAVE TO "CHANGE ITS ATTITUDE OF COOPERATION" END SUMMARY.

2. SINCE THE AMBASSADOR IS ILL, THE DCM PRESENTED THE SECRETARY'S LETTER TO FOREIGN SECRETARY KEWAL SINGH ON THE AFTERNOON OF NOVEMBER 8. (THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD RETURNED EXHAUSTED FROM TEHRAN EARLY IN THE MORNING). THE DCM EXPLAINED THAT AS THE LETTER POINTED OUT WE WERE ALREADY IN TOUCH WITH OFFICIALS OF THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH INDIA AND THE NEED FOR PROTECTION OF THE HINDU MINORITY. KEWAL SINGH DEEPLY APPRECIATED THE LETTER, HE RECALLED THAT THE SECRETARY HAD TOLD CHAVAN IN WASHINGTON OF THE US VIEW THAT BANGLADESH SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON DEVELOPMENT AND AVOID A FRUITLESS BALANCE OF POWER GAME EXACTLY AS SET FORTH IN HIS LETTER. HE PARTICULARLY NOTED HIS APPRECIATION FOR OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD RELATIONS AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES AND THOUGHT THAT OUR MENTIONING THIS TO THE LEADERS OF BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL. HE TOOK NOTE OF THE SECRETARY'S VIEW ABOUT EXTERNAL INVOLVEMENT IN BANGLADESH AND AGREED THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT THERE SHOULD BE ABLE TO TEND TO ITS INTERNAL PROBLEMS WITHOUT INTERFERENCE FROM OUTSIDE.

3. KEWAL SINGH ASKED FOR OUR LATEST INFORMATION ABOUT THE SITUATION IN DACCA. DRAWING ON RECENT DACCA REPORTS, THE DCM DESCRIBED THE SITUATION AS SETTLING DOWN BUT STILL UNCERTAIN. THE DCM TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO NOTE FRANKLY THAT IN THE EMOTIONAL SITUATION IN DACCA, THERE WERE ANTI-INDIAN SENTIMENTS IN CERTAIN QUARTERS. IN THIS ATMOSPHERE, AS KEWAL SINGH KNEW, THERE WAS A TENDENCY FOR STATEMENTS ON ONE SIDE TO HAVE EITHER A HELPFUL OR-- KEWAL SINGH INTERRUPTED TO SAY, HARMFUL--EFFECT ON THE OTHER. FOR EXAMPLE, THE INDIAN STATEMENT ABOUT THE SAFETY OF THEIR NATIONALS (WHICH KEWAL SINGH SAID THE GOI FELT IT MUST MAKE BECAUSE OF THE ATTACK ON THE INDIAN AIRLINES OFFICES) HAD PROMPTED A STATEMENT BY THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT THAT FOREIGN NATIONALS WERE SAFE (KEWAL SINGH WAS UNAWARE OF THIS).

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4. KEWAL SINGH THEN GAVE THE INDIAN ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION WHICH QUITE CLOSELY RESEMBLES OURS. HE SAID, HOWEVER THAT THEIR INFORMATION IS SCANTY AS COMMUNICATIONS WITH THEIR EMBASSY HAD BEEN RESTORED ONLY THIS MORNING. THEIR HIGH COMMISSIONER REPORTS THAT GENERAL ZIA'S AUTHORITY IS GRADUALLY BEING ACKNOWLEDGED IN WIDER CIRCLES. THERE HAD BEEN DISSENTION IN THE ARMY, BUT THIS IS BEING RESOLVED. KEWAL SINGH THOUGHT THAT A PROCESS OF CALMING AND CONSOLIDATION MAY NOW START. THEIR VIEW OF ZIA IS THAT HE IS

NOT MUCH INCLINED IDEOLOGICALLY ONE WAY OR ANOTHER--THEIR HIGH COMMISSIONER REPORTS THAT HE IS A PRACTICAL MAN. BUT HIS TASKS ARE SO ENORMOUS, UNLESS HE HAS THE SUPPORT OF BOTH SENIOR ARMY AND CIVILIAN LEADERS IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW HE CAN SUCCEED. BUT ZIA SEEMS TO REALIZE THAT HE WILL NEED THE SUPPORT OF THOSE LEADERS WHO REMAIN. THE INDIANS HAD BEEN QUITE CONCERNED DURING THE TWO OR THREE DAYS OF EMOTIONALISM AND KILLING. THERE HAD BEEN ANTI-INDIAN SLOGANS AND THE GOI WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE SAFETY OF INDIANS: HOWEVER, THEY HAVE RECEIVED NO WORD OF HARM TO ANY INDIANS.

5. REPEATING THAT THE GOI HAD ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TOLD THE BENGALIS THAT IT HAD NO INTENTION OF INTERFERING IN THEIR AFFAIRS, HE WENT ON TO DESCRIBE HOW EVENTS IN BANGLADESH CAN AFFECT INDIAN SECURITY. INDIA REMAINED CONCERNED THAT INTERNAL PROBLEMS COULD CAUSE OPPRESSION OF THE HINDU MINORITY AND ITS EXODUS. IT IS NOT JUST THAT THE INFLUX OF REFUGEES WOULD BE AN IMMENSE BURDEN FOR INDIA, BUT COMMUNAL INCIDENTS IN BANGLADESH WOULD LEAD TO REACTIONS AGAINST MUSLIMS IN INDIA. INDIA HAD RELATIONS WITH ITS OWN SIXTY MILLION MUSLIMS TO WORRY ABOUT. (HE CITED LEBANON AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT CAN HAPPEN IN A COUNTRY IN WHICH COMMUNAL HATRED GETS OUT OF CONTROL). THUS IT WAS THE INDIAN VIEW THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO INTERFERENCE BY "ONE OR THE OTHER" IN THE AFFAIRS OF INDIAN AND BANGLADESH; HIS MEANING WAS THAT INDIA WOULD CONSIDER BANGLADESH POLICIES LEADING TO COMMUNAL RIOTING FIRST IN BANGLADESH AND THEN IN INDIA AS INTERFERENCE IN INDIAN AFFAIRS. THEREFORE, HE SAID, WHILE HOW BANGLADESH RUNS ITS GOVERNMENT IS ITS AFFAIR, IF BANGLADESH POLICIES CREATE PROBLEMS OR HURT INDIAN INTERESTS, THEN "INDIA MUST EXPRESS ITS CONCERN."

6. KEWAL SINGH HASTENED TO POINT OUT, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS NOT AWARE OF ANY SUCH POLICIES: HE HAD NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT ZIA WAS NOT AWARE OF INDIA'S VIEWS. FURTHERMORE, KEWAL SINGH RECEIVES DAILY REPORTS OF REFUGEE MOVEMENT ACROSS THE BORDER TO INDIA AND
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AS OF NOW THERE ARE NO PEOPLE COMING THERE IN FEAR AND DISTRESS. HE REPORTED THAT THEIR HIGH COMMISSIONER HAS BEEN OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT. THE GOI IS PLANNING TO SEND HIM INSTRUCTIONS TO SAY THREE THINGS TO THE NEW LEADERS: INDIA WILL NOT WANT TO COMMENT ON THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF BANGLADESH, IT IS SAD THAT SO MANY EMINENT LEADERS ARE DEAD, AND IT HOPES THAT THE QUESTION OF MINORITIES WILL RECEIVE THEIR CAREFUL ATTENTION.

7. KEWAL SINGH ALSO MADE SOME MENTION, AS HAVE HIS COLLEAGUES, OF FURTHER INDIAN CONCERNS ABOUT ECONOMIC CHAOS LEADING TO POLITICAL EXTREMISM IN BANGLADESH WHICH WOULD SPILL OVER INTO INDIA.

8. IN CONCLUSION, KEWAL SINGH SAID THAT IF THINGS GO ON AS THEY NOW SEEM TO BE, HE DID NOT SEE A PROBLEM INsofar AS INDIA'S INTERESTS ARE CONCERNED UNLESS THE NEW GOVERNMENT TURNS SHARPLY

COMMUNAL IN ITS ATTITUDE OR VERY HOSTILE TO INDIA. IN EITHER OF THOSE CASES, INDIA MIGHT HAVE TO "CHANGE ITS ATTITUDE OF CO-OPERATION."

9. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY AGAIN EXPRESSED HIS GREAT APPRECIATION FOR THE SECRETARY'S HELPFUL LETTER WHICH HE SAID HE WOULD GIVE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER THIS EVENING ALONG WITH A REPORT OF HIS CONVERSATION. HE SPOKE WARMLY ABOUT IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE US AND PARTICULARLY URGED THE EMBASSY TO SPEAK TO HIM AT ANY TIME IT WISHED TO DISCUSS EVENTS IN THIS AREA.

10. THE DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO REPEAT THIS MESSAGE TO DACCA AND ISLAMABAD.

SAXBE UNQTE KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, CAT-C, DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 NOV 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE265530
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: S/S:JPMOFFAT:HE
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Film Number: N750005-0653
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751162/aaaacdrb.tel
Line Count: 183
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 AUG 2003 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <24 NOV 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY ON BANGLADESH SUMMARY: FOREIGN SECRETARY KEWAL SINGH DEEPLY APPRECIATED THE
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PINS, IN, BD, (KISSINGER, HENRY A), (KEWAL SINGH)
To: DACCA ISLAMABAD
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006